

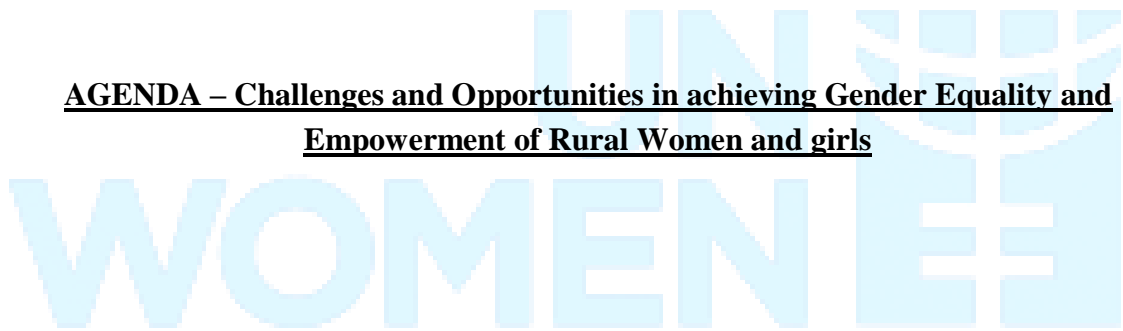


United Nations Information Centre (UNIC)

BACKGROUND GUIDE

UN WOMEN

AGENDA – Challenges and Opportunities in achieving Gender Equality and Empowerment of Rural Women and girls



Letter from the Executive Board

We welcome you to Amity International Model United Nations, 2019. This is not going to be a usual exhaustive guide but more of a capsule course, a stepping stone for more exhaustive research. This background guide in no way should be considered as a study guide. The links for further research and what the Executive Board expects from you to be discussed will be mentioned below. A study guide by the Executive Board wouldn't make much sense as it will be either inspired or taken from other reports mentioned in this document. Rather than reading things out of context we will provide all the links and sources required ensuring a well-structured discussion and debate from 18-20 January, 2018.

Please feel free to contact us via E-Mail.

Good Luck!

Aayush Mohanty

Chairperson

aayush2m@gmail.com

Jasjit Singh

Vice Chairperson

jasjit56@gmail.com



Introduction

In order to be able to incorporate a gender perspective in the debate it is critical to understand the meaning of gender as opposed to sex;

Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women (WHO). At the same time, it may not always be possible to define sex along the dichotomous lines of male-female only, as is made evident by inter-sexed individuals.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (WHO). While sex and its associated biological functions are programmed genetically, gender roles and power relations and the power relations they reflect are a social construct – they vary across cultures and through time, and thus are amenable to change.

Gender roles are the particular economic, social roles and responsibilities considered appropriate for women and men in a given society. Gender roles and characteristics do not exist in isolation, but are defined in relation to one another and through the relationship between women and men, girls and boys.

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both, women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups women and men (for example: women belonging to ethnic minorities, lesbian women or women with disabilities). Gender equality is both, a human rights principle and a precondition for sustainable, people-centered development.

General human rights treaties

The principle of equality of women and men and the corresponding prohibition of discrimination is a fundamental principle of international human rights law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 proclaims that:

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (...)

Similar anti-discrimination provisions can be found in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 2 (1) and 3) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Articles 2 (1) and 3), which were adopted in 1966 and, together with the UDHR, constitute the "International Bill of Human Rights".

At the time when these documents were adopted, the concepts of gender and gender-based discrimination were not yet on the international agenda – therefore, reference is made to discrimination on basis of sex.

The UN Women's Rights Convention CEDAW

In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Adopting such a women-specific treaty was considered necessary because, notwithstanding the existence of general human rights treaties, the widespread and systematic discrimination of women in all spheres of life was still a global reality. All countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia have ratified CEDAW and are therefore bound obliged to implement its provisions at country level. [Click here for the dates of ratification by country.](#)

CEDAW defines discrimination against as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." (Article 1).

This definition covers both, intended/direct ("purpose") as well as unintended/indirect ("effect") discrimination. CEDAW obliges states parties not only to ensure equality of men and women before the law (de jure) but also in real life (de facto). It is also important to note that CEDAW covers not only an obligation of states to refrain from discrimination

through discriminatory laws or acts of state officials, but also to take appropriate steps to protect women from discrimination by private persons (Article 2 (d), (e)).

Challenges in Rural Areas

For the empowerment of rural women of all ages and girls to be realised through sustainable development, there must be more than a superficial commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. Instead, there must be a concerted action across all countries and communities. Approaching gender equality as a crosscutting issue requires gender to be included at all stages of policy development, implementation, monitoring and accountability. Rural women and girls are crucial contributors, implementers and beneficiaries of sustainable development. Their empowerment is fundamental to the achievement of the full 2030 Agenda.

Rural women, especially indigenous women's traditional knowledge of environmental management must be utilised. They play a vital role in agricultural development and the achievement of food security, to ensure the health and well-being of families and communities. Let's not forget the women in rural areas who are not farmers, live in developed countries and are confronted with numerous cuts to infrastructure and facilities. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development as defined in Principle 20 of the 1992 Rio Declaration and subsequent reviews. With increased feminization of agriculture, 43% of the world's agricultural labour force and more than 60% in developing countries are women, therefore contributing to an important engine of growth and poverty reduction in the rural economy.

Rural women play a vital role in agricultural production, a critical component of food security; however, they are unable to reach their full potential due to discriminatory norms, policies and laws. Women are less likely to own their own land; property laws discriminate against women inheriting family property, widows are discarded in their rights to inherit from their deceased husband, and custom and patriarchal social norms often favour male relatives. These barriers threaten rural women's food security, forcing them to migrate to urban areas searching for other livelihoods. Discriminatory laws and policies which prevent women throughout the life-course from controlling their productive resources, lock them in a cycle of poverty and prevent them from being economically empowered. Investing in

small-scale farming, with the particular inclusion of women, is a vital step towards meeting the challenges of food production in the future. Women are lifelong agents of change in their families, typically investing 90% of their earnings into their families and communities compared to 35% by men, thus more likely to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty.

Governments are not living up to their international commitment to protect women from discrimination, as the gap between de jure and de facto discrimination persists. Rural women still find it more difficult to access basic education and vocational (secondary) education provision; as girls are expected to assist with family routines such as fetching and carrying fuel and water. According to the UNESCO 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, some 63% of women, predominantly living in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and in South and West Asia, have not attained even minimal literacy skills. Education provides a major key to lifting women and girls out of poverty and enabling them to achieve their true potential.

Challenges of Accountability and Monitoring of Initiatives

Global initiatives designed to benefit the daily lives of people everywhere risk not being implemented appropriately, if at all, unless they are regularly monitored and accounted for. To measure whether rural women and girls benefit from sustainable development efforts, it is critical to have accurate and reliable information through qualitative and quantitative indicators, including citizen generated and private sector data. For knowledge about the status of rural women and girls to be accurate, it is important that gender and age differentiated statistics and indicators are collected nationally, regionally and globally to measure gender gaps at each life stage and adjust development programmes to rectify inequalities. At a minimum, data should be disaggregated based on age, sex, marital status, geography, income, disability, race and ethnicity and other factors relevant to monitoring inequalities (including multiple inequalities experienced by women and girls) as stated in Sustainable Development Goal 17.18.

Although some indicators are measured by household (not by individual), it remains important that the data collected for those indicators is disaggregated. It is essential to know how the household is comprised, for example if a woman is alone raising her children or an older widow, this can often prematurely allow poverty and abuse to prevail. Without

this information it will be difficult to properly and fully identify the gaps and challenges facing women and girls' empowerment as part of sustainable development.

Without mandated and obligatory follow-up and review processes, there is a risk that the voices of women and girls will go unheard, systematically and in all sectors. The voluntary nature of reporting on progress provides countries with the option not to follow-up or review the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at all, or to be selective in their review. Actions undertaken by the private sector contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals must also be accountable, as often their own interests do not prioritise the needs of vulnerable and marginalised people.

Who are women in rural areas: old question - new answer?

Women constitute a majority of the poor and are often the poorest of the poor. The societal disadvantage and inequality they face because they are women shapes their experience of poverty differently from that of men, increases their vulnerability, and makes it more challenging for them to climb out of poverty. In other words, poverty is a gendered experience — addressing it requires a gender analysis of norms and values, the division of assets, work and responsibility, and the dynamics of power and control between women and men in poor households.

In most societies, gender norms define women's role as largely relegated to the home, as mother and caretaker, and men's role as responsible for productive activities outside the home. These norms influence institutional policies and laws that define women's and men's access to productive resources such as education, employment, land and credit. There is overwhelming evidence from around the world to show that girls and women are more disadvantaged than boys and men in their access to these valued productive resources. There is also ample evidence to show that the responsibilities of women and the challenges they face within poor households and communities are different from those of men. Persistent gender inequality and differences in women's and men's roles greatly influence the causes, experiences and consequences of women's poverty. Policies and programs to alleviate poverty must, therefore, take account of gender inequality and gender differences to effectively address the needs and constraints of both poor women and men.

Girls and women in poor households bear a disproportionate share of the work and responsibility of feeding and caring for family members through unpaid household work. In poor rural households, for example, women's work is dominated by activities such as firewood, water and fodder collection, care of livestock and subsistence agriculture. The drudgery of women's work and its time-intensive demands contribute to women's "time poverty" and greatly limit poor women's choice of other, more productive income-earning opportunities.

Faced with difficult time-allocation choices, women in poor households will often sacrifice their own health and nutrition, or the education of their daughters, by recruiting them to take care of siblings or share in other household tasks. This is just one piece of a pattern of gendered discrimination in the allocation of resources in poor households. Evidence shows that the gender gaps in nutrition, education and health are greater in poorer households. This lack of investment in the human capital of girls perpetuates a vicious, intergenerational cycle of poverty and disadvantage that is partly responsible for the intractable nature of poverty.

A focus on poor women as distinct from men in efforts to reduce poverty is justified because women's paid and unpaid work is crucial for the survival of poor households.

Women are economic actors: They produce and process food for the family; they are the primary caretakers of children, the elderly and the sick; and their income and labor are directed toward children's education, health and well-being. In fact, there is incontrovertible evidence from a number of studies conducted during the 1980s that mothers typically spend their income on food and health care for children, which is in sharp contrast to men, who spend a higher proportion of their income for personal needs. A study conducted in Brazil, for example, found that the positive effect on the probability that a child will survive in urban Brazil is almost 20 times greater when the household income is controlled by a woman rather than by a man.

Yet women face significant constraints in maximizing their productivity. They often do not have equal access to productive inputs or to markets for their goods. They own only 15 percent of the land worldwide, work longer hours than men and earn lower wages. They are

overrepresented among workers in the informal labour market, in jobs that are seasonal, more precarious and not protected by labour standards.

Despite this, policies and programs that are based on notions of a typical household as consisting of a male bread-winner and dependent women and children often target men for the provision of productive resources and services. Such an approach widens the gender-based productivity gap, negatively affects women's economic status, and does little to reduce poverty. Addressing these gender biases and inequalities by intentionally investing in women as economic agents, and doing so within a framework of rights that ensures that women's access to and control over productive resources is a part of their entitlement as citizens, is an effective and efficient poverty reduction strategy.

Topics to Discuss

- ☐ Challenges in Sanitation
- ☐ Challenges in Equal Pay
- ☐ Challenges of transition from rural to urban labourers
- ☐ Opportunities in Household production
- ☐ Inclusion of Household production in SDG
- ☐ Addressing Violence and Discrimination against women
- ☐ Access to Basic and Higher educations in rural areas
- ☐ Access to proper healthcare services
- ☐ Role of ICT in women empowerment
- ☐ Role of non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations

Delegates can bring out new topics via un-moderated caucuses and not to adhere to the aforementioned topics.

Research Links

Women and Poverty

<https://opentextbc.ca/womenintheworld/chapter/chapter-1-women-and-poverty/>

What is Gender Equity? <https://www.caaws.ca/gender-equity-101/what-is-gender-equity/>

Rural Women Must Not Be “Left Behind” <https://womendeliver.org/2017/rural-women-must-not-be-left-behind/>

Water, Sanitation & Gender Equality

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/watersanitation.pdf>

Gender equality <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/gender-equality.html>

The role of empowering women and achieving gender equality to the sustainable development of Ethiopia

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405883116300508>

Gender and Information Communication Technology

<https://www.sida.se/contentassets/3a820dbd152f4fca98bacde8a8101e15/gender-and-ict.pdf>

Gender inequality, risk and vulnerability in the rural economy: re-focusing the public works agenda to take account of economic and social risks

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6070.pdf> (Delegates can use this report (dated 2010) for a comparative analysis)